

Organizational culture and public diplomacy in the digital sphere: The case of South Korea

Jeffrey Robertson 

Underwood International College, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea

Correspondence

Jeffrey Robertson, Underwood International College, Yonsei University, 85 Songdogwahak-ro, Yeonsu-Gu, Seodaemun-gu 03722, Seoul, Korea.
Email: jeffrey.robertson@yonsei.ac.kr

Abstract

Digital diplomacy is the latest technological advance to push change in diplomatic practice. It relates to the application of digital technologies, including information and communication technologies, software engineering and big data, and artificial intelligence, to the practice of diplomacy. Positioned in the top ranks of connectivity, internet speed, smartphone ownership, and social media usage, South Korea should be a leader in the use of digital technologies in diplomatic practice. However, South Korea is not a leader; indeed, it has been left behind. I explore digital diplomacy as a “disruptive technology” and look at criteria for organizational adaptation. I then use these criteria to assess South Korea’s adaptation and draw from these the specific policy challenges facing South Korea. To conclude, I propose four core criteria to aid digital diplomacy adaptation in South Korea and other similar states.

KEYWORDS

digital diplomacy, diplomacy, South Korea, foreign policy, foreign ministry

1 | INTRODUCTION

In January 2018, Bloomberg ranked South Korea as the globe’s most innovative economy (Jung, 2018). In its most recent E-Government Survey, the United Nations ranked South Korea as the

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globe's third most developed state for e-government (United Nations, 2016). For the last 10 years, international organizations including the International Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the International Telecommunications Union have consistently ranked South Korea at the top levels (often number 1) for internet connectivity, internet speed, smartphone ownership, and social media usage.

For all intents and purposes, South Korea is a digital society. South Korea should be a leader in digital diplomacy—the application of digital technologies to the pursuit of diplomatic objectives, but it is not. Indeed, despite its impressive innovation and technology statistics, South Korea lags behind competitors in digital diplomacy.

The South Korean case draws interest as it suggests there is more to digital diplomacy than simply innovation and technology. What distinct challenges have prevented South Korea from adapting to digital diplomacy; what do these distinct challenges tell us about organizational adaptation to digital diplomacy; and could similar challenges also impact other states? The South Korean case could provide insight into the reasons some countries have jumped ahead, whereas others have lagged behind in digital diplomacy.

To answer these questions, I first explore digital diplomacy in the context of technology adoption in public organizations. I use an established criterion for technology adaption in public organizations to assess the case study of South Korea. I then propose four core organizational changes that could aid digital diplomacy adaptation in South Korea and other similar states. I conclude by commenting on how culture matters in digital diplomacy.

2 | DIGITAL DIPLOMACY AS A DISRUPTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Diplomacy—the mediation of estranged social actors—balances continuity and change. Characteristics such as ceremony, secrecy, status, hierarchy, and inviolability that facilitate mediation stretch back to the earliest incarnations of diplomacy. Yet, at the same time, diplomacy constantly evolves with new actors, societal changes, innovations, and technologies. Technological advances, such as the telegraph, radio, computer, air travel, and satellite communications, affect constraints on policy action caused by time, distance, and information. They narrow the timeframe for diplomatic decision-making and implementation. Importantly, they also directly challenge the characteristics of ceremony, secrecy, status, hierarchy, and inviolability that facilitate mediation and can thus push evolutionary or in certain circumstances revolutionary change in diplomatic practice.

Diplomacy can be thought to consist of four broad tasks—representation, negotiation, reporting, and the protection of nationals abroad (Robertson, 2016, p. 21–24). Digital diplomacy relates to the application of digital technologies, including information and communication technologies (ICTs), software engineering and big data, and artificial intelligence, to the pursuit of these tasks. To date, research has focused predominantly on how ICTs and software engineering and big data, as well as early forms of artificial intelligence, coalesce in the social media environment. As a result, the subfield of public diplomacy—the capacity to communicate with and influence foreign publics—attracts the most attention. Specifically, such research focuses on how social media facilitates or changes public diplomacy by enhancing the state's capacity to communicate, interact, and persuade foreign publics (Manor, 2016). As more states recognize the importance of digital diplomacy to avoid competitive disadvantage, research on how organizations—specifically foreign ministries—adapt to digital diplomacy is also a growing subject for research (Bátora, 2008; Hocking, Melissen, Riordan, & Sharp, 2012; Holmes, 2015, p. 13–33).

In an organizational context, digital technologies can be seen as either “sustaining” or “disruptive” (National Research Council, 2010, p. 11). Sustaining technologies improve practices. In the short-term, they can disrupt the status quo, but through trickle down effects, ultimately have a minimal impact on existing hierarchies. In the context of diplomacy, this implies that digital diplomacy would allow early adapters to secure a competitive advantage in the short-term and equally would impose competitive disadvantage on late adapters in the short-term. Disruptive technologies are distinguished from sustaining technologies by their lack of impact in the short-term and substantial impact in the long-term, including the capacity to upset or radically transform the existing status quo. In the context of diplomacy, this implies that leading organizations would neglect, underrate, misunderstand, or be unable to adapt to digital diplomacy in the short-term and would suffer competitive disadvantage in the long-term.

Organizational responses to both emerging and disruptive technologies can take three broad forms: organizations can adapt to the technological change and implement strategies to avoid competitive disadvantage, exploit the technological change and secure competitive advantage, or avoid (and resist) the technological change and face the risk of competitive disadvantage. There are three broad factors that determine an organization's capacity to adapt, exploit, or avoid technological change.

First, an organization must have access to the necessary infrastructure or hardware to utilize the technology. Reflecting this, adapting to digital diplomacy is obviously more difficult for the foreign ministries of states with only limited access to critical internet infrastructure, such as copper, fiber optic and/or satellite links, routing, and associated software services. Additionally, a state must have adequate human resources and societal acceptance to adapt to the digital environment.

Second, an organization must have management and administrative structures in place that facilitate adaptation to new technology. This includes structures, such as adequate financial management to demonstrate an ideal cost–benefit analysis, communication and dispersion conduits, and an adaptive organizational culture (Steers, Meyer, & Sanchez-Runde, 2008, p. 256; Lee, Trimi, & Kim, 2013, p. 22–24). Reflecting this, adapting to digital diplomacy is more difficult for the foreign ministries of states with highly conservative foreign ministries that maintain structures that reinforce diplomatic norms of patience, refrain, exclusivity, secrecy, status, and hierarchy.

Finally, there must be supportive attitudes towards technology and the organization's capacity to adapt within an organization. This includes broadly supportive leadership and individual willingness to follow and adapt to different practices.

The above present the means to assess a foreign ministry's capacity to exploit digital diplomacy. To assess the capacity of a foreign ministry to exploit digital diplomacy it is necessary to (1) assess national infrastructure and hardware; (2) assess foreign ministry management and administrative structures; and (3) assess individual attitudes within the foreign ministry towards technology and organizational capacity.

3 | CASE STUDY: SOUTH KOREA

Assessing how foreign ministries adapt to digital diplomacy can be difficult. It requires privileged access, which in systems with a shorter history of openness and public access can prove very difficult. Importantly, it also requires a willingness to criticize—something that does not always coalesce with privileged access. Perhaps for this reason, there is no in-depth research on the capacity of South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) to adapt to digital diplomacy. Relevant research to date looks at South Korea in the context of e-government and public

administration, digital media and public diplomacy, or merely touches upon South Korea in a much broader survey of the field of digital diplomacy (Kang, 2009; Kim, 2012; Lee & Melissen, 2011; Melissen & Sohn, 2016; Snow & Taylor, 2009). The only study that looks directly at South Korea's digital diplomacy provides an introduction to the case but does not critically assess technology adoption within MOFA itself (Melissen & de Keulenaar, 2017, p. 294–297). This study is based on a series of interviews undertaken with MOFA personnel from January 2017 to December 2017, accumulating to just under 23 interview hours. Reflecting the context of respondents, the research maintained strict confidentiality with all identifying material removed. Respondents included three senior, two midranking, and seven junior level officials, working within the ministry or on posting, across different bureaus (including rotation between bureaus during the interview period).

Academics debate the effectiveness of commonly utilized social media metrics in the assessment of digital diplomacy (Spry, 2016). Although individually unreliable, they can together give an indication of the status of progress (or lack of progress) in adapting to the digital diplomacy environment. These metrics include social media platforms (number of platforms and uptake of new platforms); individual social media platform account metrics (number of followers, sharing, replies, etc.); individual social media platform account qualitative metrics (best practice in platform social media usage); and digital diplomacy policy communication (strategic policy documents, speeches, etc.).

As of January 2018, South Korea's MOFA utilized Facebook, Naver Blog, Twitter, and YouTube. Importantly, it has no central web platform from which individual accounts are coordinated. Uptake of new and/or alternative platforms has been slow, and diplomatic post accounts vary considerably between regular local language engagement to only Korean language or a total absence of accounts. MOFA does have a separate public diplomacy website with widgets promoting public diplomacy social media accounts. However, these social media accounts are “public diplomacy” accounts, which are strangely separate from MOFA. Further, with links predominantly in the Korean language, the “public diplomacy” accounts are focused more on connecting with the South Korean public than influencing foreign publics.

Australia serves as a contrast. Similar to South Korea, Australia was slow to adapt to the use of the digital sphere in diplomacy yet made progress through a coordinated strategic plan to promote organizational change. Australia has a user-friendly central website, with multiple links to recent news events and core programs, as well as a ministry hosted central blog. It has a social media page that lists all agency, program, and individual social media accounts (DFAT, 2018). This includes multiple accounts on various platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Flickr, and LinkedIn, as well as regionally important platforms, such as Sina WeiBo, Renmin Weibo, Youku, WeChat, and SoundCloud. Accounts are regionally directed and utilize local languages and social media characteristics. While there is clearly an effort to engage the Australian public, there remains a clear focus on influencing foreign publics.

Individual social media platform account metrics are unreliable. They rarely provide sufficient information and are known to be easily manipulated. However, in contrast with like-minded states, social media platform account metrics do indicate specific deficiencies in the South Korea's strategy. Taking Australia and Twitter as an example, as of April 2018, Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has posted 18.9 thousand times, has 69.4 thousand followers, and has liked (a form of interaction) 7,132 other users' posts. In contrast, as of April 2018, South Korea's MOFA has posted 3,743 times; has 12.5 thousand followers; and has liked four other users' posts—thus demonstrating either a lack of interest or unwillingness to engage. Importantly, there is also an important contrast to be made with MOFA's Korean language

metrics. As of April 2018, MOFA's Korean language account has posted 14.3 thousand times, has 193 thousand followers, and has liked 224 other users' posts. Once again, demonstrating a focus more on connecting with the South Korean public than influencing foreign publics.

Qualitative metrics focus on best practice in the use of social media platforms. Again, taking Australia and Twitter as examples, best practice utilizes a combination of imagery and text, hashtags, links, and callouts, as well as polls, community interaction, and selective user engagement. Examples can be found in most Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Twitter posts (DFAT, 2011). Prior to February 2018, the majority of MOFA's Twitter posts consisted of a single sentence with a link to a black and white MOFA website page with an unofficial speech or statement translation. When images were used, they consisted of standard, formal handshakes or gift exchanges; "two-tribe" interaction at a negotiating tables; or podium position presentations—with text devoid of the broader policy context. Since February 2018, they have adapted to best practice with combined text and image; contextual and candid images rather than standard, formal images; and more user engagement (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010). The same applies to all distinct social media platforms.

The final commonly utilized digital diplomacy metrics is digital diplomacy policy communication. While South Korea has demonstrated significant outreach to the policy community, it is yet to promulgate a specific digital media strategy. In contrast, Australia, the United Kingdom, Spain, Israel, Singapore, France, Poland, and Japan have all included digital media in publicly available strategies (Adesina, 2017, p. 7–9).

Accordingly, reflecting the above, South Korea does remain significantly behind comparable states in the use of digital media. However, a note of caution on this claim must be made. There is a clear distinction between MOFA's Korean and English language digital diplomacy metrics. South Korea is significantly more advanced in the use of social media to connect and engage with Korean speakers. The problem is that native speakers or those that have spent years learning Korean already love Korea. While public outreach is important, it is not public diplomacy. Preaching to the converted wastes funds that could be used to influence, engage, or persuade foreign audiences. This could potentially be explained by the South Korean interpretation of public diplomacy. Officials express an understanding that public diplomacy is as much about connecting to, and engaging with the domestic audience rather than engaging or persuading foreign audiences. This has become an even more focused policy concern with the Moon Jae-in administration, which has taken steps to engage the domestic public through *kukmin waegyo*, literally "people's diplomacy" or better translated as "citizen diplomacy." Accountability to the public has thus become an abiding concern of the current government reflected in both policy and budget terms. Accordingly, it could be argued that South Korea manages and perhaps even excels in digital public *outreach*, but has limited interest in, and thus demonstrates limited success in digital public diplomacy.

To assess the capacity of a foreign ministry to exploit digital diplomacy, it is necessary to (a) assess national infrastructure and hardware, (b) assess foreign ministry management and administrative structures; and (c) assess individual attitudes within the foreign ministry towards technology and organizational capacity.

3.1 | Infrastructure and hardware

South Korea undoubtedly has the necessary infrastructure and hardware to utilize digital technology. In international rankings, South Korea is a leader in all things digital: ICT access, use, and skills (International Telecommunications Union); ICT research and development (OECD);

and e-government development (UN). There is no question that South Korea, like many states in the region, has the necessary infrastructure and hardware to utilize digital diplomacy. Indeed, South Korea is ahead of most states currently adapting or even exploiting digital diplomacy.

However, South Korea's technological leadership may itself present a problem. The South Korean digital environment does not seamlessly integrate into the global digital environment. Social media in South Korea started earlier than Facebook or Twitter. South Korea's Cyworld—a uniquely Korean interactive social media platform—was launched in 1999, compared with Facebook's 2004 or Twitter's 2006. As Cyworld fell from favor, Kakao Talk took over. Kakao today maintains multiple platforms including blogging, maps, gaming, payments, and transportation. Interaction on platforms such as Kakao are based on existing “real life” social networks, as opposed to the creation or establishment of new social networks, such as on Facebook or Twitter.

Thus, like certain other countries, South Korea has followed a different social media path that either complements, supplements, or for the younger generation, even replaces mainstream platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter. While individual officers within MOFA are avid and often highly regular users of digital technology, they use platforms that are more private, insular, and separated from the foreign publics with which they should be engaging.

3.2 | Foreign ministry management and administrative structures

MOFA was the first ministry of state to be established with the promulgation of the Republic of Korea in July 1948. From an early stage, MOFA needed established networks and language skills and was therefore staffed with highly educated, socially elite individuals. Early recruitment segued into an established pattern of recruitment from South Korea's top universities. MOFA thus inherited a degree of social elitism and an associated conservative bent. Institutional conservatism runs through South Korea's foreign ministry.

In a narrow sense, conservatism connotes a preference for existing institutions, a preference for tradition, and a disposition towards moderation and caution—none of which are conducive to transformation and change (Wilson, 2013, p. 13). Conservatism sustains a culture poorly suited to innovation and adaptation necessary to succeed in the digital environment. In MOFA, this can be seen in attitudes to secrecy, elitism, and individual initiative.

First, secrecy reduces the willingness of the organization to open itself to technology, which inherently presents a security risk. The early struggle for political legitimacy as one half of a divided nation and the ongoing security threat presented by North Korea, inevitably placed a high premium on secrecy in South Korean government agencies.

Second, elitism reduces the willingness of the organization to accept outside assistance and advice. South Korea's public administration inherits a degree of Confucian scholarly aloofness and the public recognizes the diplomatic role as a privileged position. For South Korea's MOFA, tradition dictates that problems should be resolved within the organization (Interviews, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017).

Finally, the risk averse culture discourages individual initiative, risk-taking, and mistake making—all of which are an inherent part of digital culture. The use of social media by diplomats serves as an example. Privately, social media is everywhere in South Korea. But in an official capacity, very few South Korean diplomats use social media. They view it as unnecessarily risky and are fearful of mistakes (Interviews, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). Additionally, communicating with the public is not seen as part of a “diplomat's job”

(Interviews, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). It is viewed as a task to be undertaken by a public relations officer. Communicating directly with the public means taking risk and accepting that mistakes will be made.

South Korea also faces one more significant challenge to organizational change—bureaucracy. The South Korean constitution limits presidential administrations to a single 5-year term. When combined with senior political appointments in line departments, South Korea's political system encourages short-term advantage rather than medium to long-term strategic planning (Robertson, 2017, p. 1–9). For this reason, policy initiatives can lack continuity between administrations, reflect domestic political prerogatives, and incline towards public demonstration rather than public administration. At the same time, this can be a substantial benefit to transformational change. If change is imposed from above, the likelihood of it being pushed through—albeit sometimes rushed through within 5 years—greatly increases.

3.3 | Individual attitudes towards technology and the organizational capacity

In South Korea's foreign ministry, the older generation entered the foreign service soon after the democratization period of the late 1980s. They often entered as a result of a privileged position in society, had studied at one of the top three Korean universities, were distinct because of their experience overseas (at a time when fewer South Koreans traveled overseas), or had connections that paved a way to a career in diplomacy. When they entered, the foreign ministry acted as a secondary appendage to the presidential office, and pursued only two core objectives: securing further economic development and demonstrating legitimacy as the representative of the Korean people vis-à-vis North Korea (Robertson, 2016, p. 165).

At the younger levels are those who entered well after the democratization period. They entered by passing a stricter foreign ministry civil service exam, through lateral entry via another ministry or more recently by gaining entry and surviving a year in the Korea National Diplomatic Academy (KNDIA). The generation is more cosmopolitan, more confident in second and third languages, has a more varied educational background, more open to change, and less socially conservative (Robertson, 2016, p. 166). Since they've entered, the foreign ministry has secured a greater voice in the bureaucracy, built its own constituency in overseas and travelling Koreans, and greatly diversified its objectives to include global governance, regionalism, public diplomacy, human rights, humanitarian affairs, green growth, and development, to name but a few (Interviews, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017).

While there are exceptions, the generational divide becomes most apparent in attitudes to innovation and change—including digital diplomacy. The older generation remains wed to a centralized structure that sees English language social media platforms run in the same way as faxes from the 1980s—authoritative, black and white boring, monolingual, unidirectional, and unengaging. The younger generation are avid users of social media, are at ease engaging on domestic and international platforms, but remain reluctant to do so openly for fear of attracting the scorn of seniors in the foreign ministry.

Junior officers, who are naturally predisposed to social media in their personal lives are discouraged from transforming these habits into a professional capacity. A good contrast can be made with Israel. Cadets in Israel's MOFA undertake intensive social media training, which essentially transforms them into a young and vibrant cadre of prolific social media actors. They are a friendly, smiling, talkative, and helpful face of Israel across all mainstream social media

platforms—with the knowledge and skills to make an impact on the algorithms that drive the digital environment.

This generational divide has led to a high degree of scepticism regarding the capacity of MOFA to transform itself (Interviews, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2017). The capacity of junior officers to capitalize on the current popularity of Korean culture, including television dramas, movies, K-pop, cuisine, and literature is constrained by organizational culture. Through digital diplomacy transformation, South Korea's public diplomacy could be substantially more effective.

4 | CATCHING UP IN DIGITAL DIPLOMACY

Reflecting the above, there are clear challenges to South Korea's organizational adaptation to digital diplomacy. First, despite having the necessary infrastructure and hardware to utilize digital technology, the South Korean digital environment does not seamlessly integrate into the global digital environment. This represents a challenge in the short-term in the context of social media and public diplomacy but has no impact in the longer-term in the context of big data and artificial intelligence. Second, South Korea faces significant hurdles as a result of its foreign ministry management and administrative structures. This includes a highly conservative organizational culture of secrecy, elitism, and hierarchy, as well as fundamental structural constraints in its constitutional and bureaucratic capacity. Finally, individual attitudes towards technology and the organizational capacity are currently bifurcated between an older and younger generation of officials, with the organizational culture of hierarchy reinforcing negative attitudes towards the capacity to reform.

South Korea is typical of other countries in the region, which face similar challenges in organizational adaption to digital diplomacy. It has strengths in infrastructure and hardware, but challenges in foreign policy management and administrative structures, and individual attitudes towards technology and organizational capacity. Melissen and Hocking, 2015, p. 49–50 propose four core organizational factors that aid in the implementation of a digital diplomacy strategy: internal structures, the presence of effective “digital champions,” the development of new roles and skills, and establishment of rules and risk management. These strategies point a way forward for South Korea.

First, changes to internal structures must be made to shake off traditions that impede technological adaptation. This can occur naturally through civil-service best practice, including transparency, representativeness, and accountability. MOFA is in the process of transformation, becoming more representative of broader South Korean society, and shaking off the conservatism that constrains adaption to digital diplomacy. This can be seen on multiple fronts that together transform MOFA's culture.

For the last 5 years, an increasing number of females have entered into senior positions; over the last 3 years, more female than male candidates have graduated from the KNDA; and most recently, in June 2017, South Korea's president, Moon Jae-in, appointed the nation's first ever female Foreign Minister, Kang Kyung-wha. In 2015, the number of female officials rose by 64% among fifth-grade civil servants and 72% among seventh-grade civil servants (MOFA, 2017, p. 437). Female officials currently play a greater role in MOFA compared with other South Korean government departments (MOFA, 2017, p. 437). Similarly, the dominance of South Korea's elite universities in recruitment has diminished to allow a broader and more representative cadre of junior staff. At the same time, horizontal movement between the foreign ministry

and other areas of the civil service, the private sector, and the NGO sector, have increased (MOFA, 2017, p. 437). These changes, which previously separated MOFA from broader South Korean society, break down internal structural barriers to change.

The most significant means to strengthen internal structures to adapt to technological change would be the establishment of an Office for Innovation and Best Practice within MOFA. There are currently programs underway in different countries seeking to adapt to the fast-changing international environment. These include efforts to reorganize the traditional balance between geographic and thematic desks within the foreign ministry, to reconstitute consular affairs into a whole-of-government ad hoc task-force structure, to privatize and/or to share with partner countries specific components of the consular and reporting functions, and to better utilize digital technologies. A foreign ministry office with a strong mandate to research, recommend, and oversee the implementation of innovation and best practice would ensure that South Korea does not miss out on evolving or revolutionary opportunities to improve policy and practice.

Second, MOFA must encourage effective “digital champions.” Digital champions are senior officers who utilize digital technology and present an example to midranking and junior officers. At the political level, an example of a digital champion is the Australian Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, whose interaction on social media is consistent and constant (Bishop, 2009). At the senior officer level, Israel’s Ambassador Yuval Rotem serves as an example (Rotem, 2016). Ambassador Rotem’s account demonstrates how an individual can narrate their lives online in a way that facilitates ministry aims. In a conservative, hierarchical, and collectivist organizational culture, digital champions present the most effective means to encourage midranking and junior officers.

Third, MOFA must seek to ensure the development of new roles and skills is prioritized. The use of digital technologies does require an investment in education and skills training. For example, to use social media effectively, it requires more than simply encouraging officers to utilize the tools of social media. It also requires individual training to understand how social media works, organizational training to understand how to maximize impact from organizational standpoint, and even strategic planning to understand how an organization’s use of social media connects and works with other like-minded organizations. Essentially, the most effective use of social media requires a whole-of-government strategy.

At an individual level, this needs to commence on recruitment. A graduate from the KNDA spends about 3 years at the ministry before undertaking a posting (although it is possible after two). This means that after training at KNDA they would have a solid period of “apprenticeship” in digital diplomacy before heading to post. With pre-post language training including components on local social media platforms, they would be more than ready to take on the responsibility of an embassy’s digital diplomacy. With the correct training and guidelines, year upon year, every graduating cadet class would strengthen South Korea’s ability to influence online foreign policy narratives. By the third year, the generation gap in digital diplomacy would be working in South Korea’s favor.

Finally, there is the establishment of rules and risk management procedures. There is an inherent risk in digital diplomacy. The grey area between an individual’s personal and professional life presents security risks; the inexperience or over-exuberance of new users presents publicity risks; and the decentralization and individualization of public communication presents management risks. Inevitably, mistakes will be made. Yet, by exploiting the generation gap, most of these mistakes would be made by cadets. If managed well, such mistakes have minimal impact and are ultimately excusable and acceptable. In a learning organization, these

mistakes would also filter upwards into program assessments and feed into future guidelines for more senior officers' use of social media.

5 | CONCLUSION: ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE MATTERS

South Korea ranks 13th globally and ninth in the OECD with a total of 172 overseas diplomatic posts, which far outstrips more traditional middle powers of Australia (110), Sweden (104), Netherlands (143), and Canada (146). For the 2017 financial year, MOFA's budget is KRW2,224 billion, which accounts for 0.8% of South Korea's total government budget. It is inexcusable for South Korea to be left behind in digital diplomacy. South Korea should be a leader in the use of digital technologies in diplomatic practice.

This research demonstrates that organizational culture matters in digital diplomacy. It can have deleterious effects on the capacity of an organization to rapidly adapt to the use of digital media. Conservatism can reinforce traditions, which in diplomacy emphasize moderation, caution, secrecy, and elitism, whereas social attitudes, such as collectivism, status, and security consciousness, can reduce willingness to push for change. Equally, this research demonstrates that culture does not have to be thought of as an impossible hurdle. Organizational transformation to adapt to digital diplomacy can occur naturally through modern civil-service best practice to promote transparency, representativeness, and accountability. Importantly, it can also be overcome through more tailored initiatives, such as the establishment of an office of best practice, the use of digital champions, and structured internal training at junior, midcareer, and senior levels.

ORCID

Jeffrey Robertson  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0549-505X>

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